

U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service

Alpena FRO Accomplishment Report

Aquatic Species Conservation and Management

Culmination of Round Goby Predation Study In Thunder Bay, Lake Huron



In October, the USFWS Alpena Fishery Resources Office culminated field work associated with a two year study funded by the US EPA Great Lakes National Program Office to examine round goby predation on lake trout eggs. Round goby are nuisance bottom dwelling fish native to Eurasia that were accidentally introduced into the Great Lakes from ship ballast water. They are thought to compete with native species for food and habitat resources, and are known to feed on eggs. They have rapidly spread within the Great Lakes and may pose a threat to

native species restoration. Lake trout rehabilitation is the focus of fishery efforts in Lakes Huron and Michigan and goby have been found in offshore areas where lake trout spawn. There is concern that goby may be feeding on lake trout eggs deposited during fall spawning. In 2002, Alpena FRO initiated a study to examine the stomachs from goby captured from a known lake trout spawning reef nearshore in Thunder Bay, Lake Huron. Fall catches of goby were examined for the presence and number of lake trout eggs. Set line and minnow trapping gear were used to collect goby. Final efforts were completed in October 2003. A report summarizing the survey and findings will be prepared in early 2004. For more information on the round goby or Alpena FRO reports access our website at <http://midwest.fws.gov/alpena>. The Service has been conducting lake trout restoration in the Great Lakes through stocking and various strain and fish quality studies and has partnered with state, provincial and tribal management agencies, and universities to restore the once abundant lake trout. An estimate of goby predation on lake trout eggs will assist with calculation of lake trout mortality in Lake Huron.

Anjanette K. Bowen

Aquatic Habitat Conservation and Management

Clute Road Timber Bridge Completed

Brook trout in McMasters Creek, a tributary of the Black River, now have improved in-stream habitat and easier passage to an additional 12 river-miles of habitat, much of it high quality spawning habitat. Construction began on August 25, 2003 at the Clute Road Crossing of McMasters Creek in Cheboygan County to remove two culverts and replace them with a timber bridge. The culverts were not large enough to pass water during precipitation events. Water collected on the upstream side of the culverts, warmed, and eroded the riverbanks. Due to lack of proper ditches and sediment basins, storm water ran down the road and directly into the river carrying with it sediments and other forms of



habitat-altering contamination. Construction of the bridge and hardening of the road surface (Afton stone) alleviated water quality issues at the crossing.

Ditches and sediment basins were constructed on both sides of the crossing. Timber for the bridge was harvested from the Pigeon Country State Forest (in close proximity to the site), and was milled and treated locally. The timber bridge has enough clearance to accommodate a 100-year flood event. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program contributed funding towards this project. Twelve river-miles were improved for fish passage on McMasters Creek, a coldwater tributary of the Black River in Cheboygan County, Michigan. Two ageing culverts were replaced with a timber bridge, and sediment input from the stream has been virtually eliminated due to the construction of proper drainage ditches and sediment basins.

Heather L. Enterline

Thunder Bay River Working Committee Meeting

Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill participated in a Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) Working Committee meeting for Thunder Bay Power (Working Committee). The Working Committee was created to assist Thunder Bay Power with its requirements to FERC under the terms of their license. Dr. Hill is the Service representative on the Working Committee. During the meeting completion of 2003 field activities was discussed. Two erosion sites on the river were repaired, inventory and monitoring of erosion sites was completed, two erosion sites were selected for repair during 2004 and aquatic nuisance plant survey was completed. An initial draft of Article 409 (Fish Passage) was distributed. The draft plan must be reviewed by both Michigan Department of Natural Resources and US Fish and Wildlife Service prior to submission to FERC. Under Article 418 (Recreational Plan), the Working Committee agreed to partner with the City of Alpena to expand on a fishing pier that exists at Lamarre Park. Partnering with the city will allow the pier to extend an additional 150 feet and result in over 500 feet of barrier free access to the river. The Working Committee is seeking assistance from the FWS and Michigan DNR to develop grants for funding this project. The meeting was attended by member representatives from Michigan DNR, Thunder Bay Power and FWS. In addition representatives from Hubbard Lake Sportsmen and Development Association, and Northeast Michigan Counsel of Governments, also participated. Service involvement in this initiative provides an opportunity to minimize the impacts of habitat alteration on fish and other aquatic species from the hydropower facilities. Service involvement in this initiative provides an opportunity to minimize the impacts of habitat alteration on fish and other aquatic species from the hydropower facilities.

Tracy D. Hill

Johnson's Crossing Road Crossing Improvement



On October 24, The Otsego County Road Commission completed replacement of a culvert on Johnson's Crossing Road located in Northern Lower Michigan in the headwaters of the Black River. The project identified two

undersized failing culverts that negatively impacted fish passage where native brook trout spawn. The aging and perched culverts did not allow for the passage of fish and the inadequate size of the culverts contributed to large amounts of sediment entering the system. Sedimentation occurred during high water events when the water was backed up by the small culverts and would flood the gravel road. The project was completed by replacing the failing culverts with a bottomless culvert. This will allow for unimpeded fish access to habitat upstream and decrease the sediment load entering the system. Oversight for the project, during construction, was provided by Biologists Wells and Enterline. Funding for this project was provided for by the Fish Passage Program, Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program, Black River Restoration Committee, and numerous local non profit organizations. This is an example of collaboration between federal, state and local governments and watershed groups to enhance aquatic habitat which will benefit fish and wildlife resources. The project is a benefit to native brook trout.

Susan E. Wells

Cooperation with Native Americans

Service Biologist Chairs Modeling Subcommittee Conference Call

Fishery Biologist Aaron Woldt of the Alpena FRO set up and chaired an October 6 conference call of the Modeling Subcommittee (MSC) of the Technical Fisheries Committee (TFC). The call was held to finalize MSC recommended 2004 lake whitefish preliminary harvest limits for 1836 Treaty waters of lakes Huron, Michigan, and Superior. The MSC was unable to complete preliminary harvest limits for all units at its September 16-18 meeting. As stipulated in the 2000 Consent Decree, preliminary lake whitefish harvest limits must be calculated by the MSC, reviewed by the TFC, and presented to the parties to the decree by November 1 each year. During the call, lake whitefish model team leaders presented model output, model diagnostic files, and harvest limits for 15 of 17 whitefish management units in treaty waters. The remaining two units (WFS 06 and WFH 03) required further work, as their catch at age models were not converging. In addition, WFH 05 and WFM 03 were identified as units where models were stable and converging, but model diagnostics were not yet complete. The MSC reached consensus on all available harvest limits. The MSC will complete work on WFS 06, WFH 03, WFH 05, and WFM 03 in the near future. Woldt compiled a table of MSC

recommended preliminary lake whitefish harvest limits for presentation to the TFC at its October 8 meeting. Woldt also compiled a table of 2001-2004 lake whitefish harvest limits for MSC and TFC review. Harvest limits produced at this meeting, when reviewed by the parties and finalized, will become binding 2004 lake whitefish harvest limits for 1836 Treaty waters. These harvest limits will allow lake whitefish fisheries to be executed while still protecting the biological integrity of the lake whitefish stocks. This outcome is consistent with the Service's goal of building and maintaining self-sustaining populations of native fish species while meeting the needs of tribal communities.

Aaron P. Woldt

Partnerships and Accountability

Local Media Receives Update on Service's Final Rule on Cormorant Management



Project Leader McClain contacted WATZ radio on October 10 to notify them of the publication of the final rule on double-crested cormorant management. This notification was a follow-up to a request from the radio station to be alerted when the final rule was published. McClain provided an interview and copies of the final rule to his contact at the news desk and a story was prepared for airing the week of October 13. There is a great deal of local interest in cormorant management, especially as it relates to Michigan DNR's fishery management program in Thunder Bay. Maintaining contact with local media provides an outlet for activities of the Service and the Alpena

FRO. Providing factual information on issues of importance to local publics is an effective means of familiarizing the public on the roles and responsibilities of the agency and office.

Jerry R. McClain

Fisheries Step-down to Great Lakes Sportfishing Council



Project Leader McClain traveled to Port Clinton, Ohio on October 18 to attend the annual meeting of the Great Lakes Sportfishing Council. McClain provided a presentation to the group on the Service's new Fisheries Program Strategic Planning Vision. This regional step-down process is intended to provide an overview of the proposed future of the Fisheries program and to seek feedback from partner agencies and constituency groups. McClain's presentation highlighted current and planned activities of the Great Lakes fishery stations including Fishery Resources Offices, National Fish Hatcheries and the Sea Lamprey Control program. In addition to the presentation on the Fisheries Vision, McClain was asked to provide a short update on the Service's final rule on Double-crested Cormorant management which was issued on October 8. The Service's Fisheries Program is seeking partner input on the proposed future of our program. This outreach effort is one of several step-down activities that will be undertaken by this station and the region to get the message out and receive feedback on the priorities of the Fisheries Program in Region 3. The Great Lakes Sportfishing Council represents sportfishing interests on Great Lakes waters and activities of the Service benefit those interests.

Jerry R. McClain

Public Use

Long Rapids Elementary Learn How Water Quality Effects Fish



On October 10, Biologists Wells and Bowen conducted a water quality clinic with students from Long Rapids Elementary School in Alpena Michigan. A group of 20 fourth graders visited the Alpena FRO to conduct an hour and a half clinic on the water quality needs of fish species. Four stations were set up outside of the office with turbidity, pH, oxygen, and fish morphology. The students rotated every 15 minutes and compared water samples from different points in the Thunder Bay River. Biologist Wells

described the different requirements for different species of fish including bullheads and trout. Each station was equipped with a list of questions for the students to assist them with understanding the connection of water quality and fish health. At the beginning of the clinic, Biologist Bowen gave a short presentation on aquatic nuisance species in the Great Lakes. She focused on invasive species found in the Alpena area. At the end of the clinic the students and accompanying parents were given a short tour of the *M/V Togue*. The boat was in Alpena to participate in the annual Lighthouse Festival as well as for upcoming fall lake trout spawning surveys. This accomplishment was an educational and outreach opportunity. We were able to showcase the USFWS and the Alpena FRO and educate young students on fishery needs in the Great Lakes. Approximately 20 students and 5 adults attended the event.

Susan E. Wells

Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival in Alpena Michigan



The 2003 Annual Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival was held in Alpena Michigan on October 10, 11, and 12. Lighthouses around the Great Lakes were showcased along with the aquatic resources associated with them. The Alpena FRO and Jordan River NFH participated in this event representing the US Fish and Wildlife Service. The *Togue* was present and

staffed with personnel from the Jordan River NFH to give tours and describe the operation of the boat. A booth was staffed by Alpena FRO personnel to answer questions concerning USFWS programs and aquatic resources. The booth was enlarged from past years to include more information and hands on activities. Biologist Wells designed a children's activities display to go with the Conserving Americas Fisheries Display. The activities included puzzles that focused on the morphology of fish, a sturgeon jeopardy game that tested a person's knowledge of lake sturgeon requirements, a salmon migration game teaching children about habitat requirements, and a family game which required people to group similar fish together in their corresponding families. The boat, booth, and games were a success with both children and adults. There were approximately 3,000

people in attendance at the festival. This accomplishment was an educational and outreach opportunity. We were able to showcase the USFWS to the public and educate people on the aquatic resources available in the Great Lakes. Approximately 3,000 people attended the 8th annual Great Lakes Lighthouse Festival.

Susan E. Wells

Let's Learn Fishing



Assistant
Project Leader
Tracy Hill
participated in

the Alpena County Public Library's Fall Series Let's Learn About it on 4 October. The series was called "Let's Learn about Fishing" and included activities or demonstrations on fly-tying, Great Lakes salmon fishing equipment, fish identification, how to bait a hook, fish game activities and casting. Hill used the event as an opportunity to promote recreational fishing among youth and to educate adults about the role of the Fish and Wildlife Service's Fishery Management Assistance Offices. Approximately 50 area youths participated in the event. Other partners assisting with the event included Boy Scouts of America, Alpena Public Schools, Michelle's Pet World and Thunder Bay Steelheaders Association. This event provided a unique opportunity to explain to the public the Service's mission and efforts to restore native fish and our efforts to control exotics in the Great Lakes. Specifically, answers to posed questions focused on efforts to rehabilitate native fish populations in the Great Lakes and the role Fishery Resources Offices have in this endeavor. The event was an excellent outreach opportunity.

Tracy D. Hill

Leadership in Science and Technology

Trap Net Modifications for Lake Whitefish Distribution Study

The Alpena FRO is participating in a Lake Huron, lake-wide distribution study for lake whitefish. The project begins in 2004 and continues through 2006, with a pilot year in 2003 to assess gear effectiveness and sampling locations. Whitefish will be tagged at 8 known spawning locations for this study. The Alpena FRO is responsible for capturing, tagging, and releasing 1,500-2,000 lake whitefish annually from the Alpena area from 2004 to 2006. MDNR will tag and release an additional 1,500-2,000 lake whitefish per year in Alpena as well. Small trap nets with 4-6' pots are scheduled to be fished for the duration of this project. Prior to fishing these nets, Fisheries Biologist Scott Koproski and MDNR Vessel Captain Jeff Diamond modified the throat opening of each net. Since these nets are primarily used by MDNR for inland sampling projects, the throat openings were too small (6 in by 6 in) to allow whitefish to enter the pots. Commercial whitefish fishers recommended throat openings of no less than 15 in by 15 in. Biologist Koproski and Captain Diamond modified 6 trap net throat openings to 15 in by 15 in or greater to allow lake whitefish to enter the traps. The trap nets were then divided equally between the two offices to be tested this fall. This project is an example of Alpena FRO's commitment to forming partnerships with other resource agencies to enhance native fish species. Lake whitefish are native to the Great Lakes and are a commercially and

recreationally important fish species. Understanding distribution patterns of lake whitefish will allow resource agencies to better manage this valuable species.

Scott R. Koproski

Workforce Management

Alpena FRO 'New' Computers



During the month of October, Admin Tech Debra Turner and Assistant Project Leader Tracy Hill began assembling new computers. These computers are replacing older computers at the FRO. All software and data were transferred to the new machines and all network connections completed. Printer, scanner, and camera software was checked for compatibility. Almost all Alpena FRO computers are currently up to date with Windows and Office XP. These new computers will improve efficiency both internally and externally. The older computers were receiving many errors and personnel were having to shut down and restart numerous times during the day using up valuable productivity time. These upgrades are consistent with the Service's Fisheries Vision for Workforce Management.

Debra L. Turner

Flotation Accessories

During the month of October, Fishery Biologist Adam Kowalski organized the purchase of safety accessories to outfit office personnel's flotation vests, float coats, and Mustang work suits. Kowalski ordered signaling mirrors, strobe lights, glow sticks, whistles, knives, and garbage bags. These items are recommended by the Motorboat Operation Certification Course (MOCC) to aid survival in case of an overboard situation. Along with personal flotation accessories, Adam also put together two rapid ditch bags for use on AFRO vessels. These bags are designed to float to the surface if the vessel sinks and contain 3 large parachute flares, waterproof first aid kit, hand held marine radio, fresh batteries, flash light, strobe light, glow sticks, signaling mirror, whistle, and garbage bags. Rapid ditch bags are not required but are recommended to help ensure the safety of the vessel crew in an emergency situation. Alpena FRO personnel spend significant time on the Great Lakes in inclement weather. Because of these potential poor working conditions, the Alpena FRO is committed to providing employees with access to the equipment needed to effectively, efficiently, and safely perform their jobs consistent with Service goals.

Adam T. Kowalski